

# AKIRA

22

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# AKIRA

BY KATSUHIRO OTOMO

Chapter 22

## BLOOD SIEGE

## WHAT HAS GONE BEFORE

Twenty-thirty. The world stands poised at the edge of World War IV. An explosion of thermonuclear proportions has been set off in **Neo-Tokyo**. The world, particularly the superpowers, wonders what has happened. In **Neo-Tokyo**, in a section known as the "old city", a band of teenaged delinquents led by **Kaneda** encounters **Number 26**, a child named **Takashi** who uses extraordinary telekinetic abilities to injure **Tetsuo**, one of Kaneda's close friends.

As a result, **Kaneda** and **Tetsuo** become entangled in a power struggle between a mysterious military and scientific organization led by the **Colonel** and an underground resistance group bent on putting a stop to the Colonel's activities.

Among the resistance, **Kaneda** meets **Kay**, her "brother" **Ryu**, and a formidable woman named **Chiyoko**. Other important resistance leaders include Ryu's superior—the opposition leader **Nezu**—and a powerful religious leader with precognitive gifts, **Lady Miyako**.

The **Colonel** has a number of psychic children under his control. Each child is identified by a number marked on the hand. At one time **Lady Miyako** was **Number 19** in this series. **Number 28** is **Akira**, so powerful that since the war he has been suspended in cryogenic sleep.

The Colonel's staff conducts experiments which awaken tremendous telepathic potential in **Tetsuo**, who is redubbed **Number 41**. Able to shrug off the most serious injuries, **Tetsuo** goes on a killing spree, murdering one of Kaneda's friends and even attacking **Kaneda**. Then, followed by **Kay** and **Kaneda**, **Tetsuo** seeks out **Akira**, whose powers he thinks may rival his own. When Tetsuo reaches Akira's resting place, the cryogenic chamber cracks from within, and **Akira**—dazed and docile following his long sleep—emerges.



Akira



Kay



The Colonel



Chiyoko



The **Colonel** summons the powerful SOL military satellite and orders that its laser cannon be fired at **Tetsuo** and **Akira**. **Akira** is saved by **Kay** and **Kaneda**, but the laser strikes Tetsuo's left arm. **Neo-Tokyo** is placed in a state of military emergency following the disaster. "Caretaker robots" patrol the streets, dealing harshly with the looters and restoring order.

**Nezu** betrays the resistance, planning to kidnap and exploit **Akira**. But he is thwarted first by a team of young psychics and then by **Ryu**, who guns his former master down. The resistance fighters and **Akira** are cornered by the Colonel's troops, but all seems well when **Takashi** fondly greets **Akira** and reintroduces him to their fellow psychics **Kiyoko** and

**Masaru**. Then **Nezu**, dying and determined for revenge, arrives and tries to kill **Akira**. He accidentally kills **Takashi** instead.

The trauma of **Takashi**'s death galvanizes **Akira**, who fully awakens and unleashes a coherent light blast powerful enough to devastate the entire city. Acting quickly, **Masaru** and **Kiyoko** sweep most of the people in the area upward, and **Kaneda** is last seen vanishing toward the sky. In the wake of the disaster, **Lady Miyako** opens her temple and offers shelter and comfort to those in need, gathering large groups of followers in the East.

**Neo-Tokyo** is completely cut off from the outside world, and in the western part of the city the Great Tokyo Empire is formed—a monarchy with **Akira** on the throne and **Tetsuo**



Tetsuo



Tetsuo's Aide



Lady Miyako



Ryu

as his Prime Minister. The Empire is eventually infiltrated by teams of spies sent from outside to learn what is happening in the city.

The **Colonel** is alone, living in hiding. **Masaru** and **Kiyoko** are sick with withdrawal from the drug which augments and channels mental powers, and **Kiyoko** tells **Kay** to find **Number 19**. The two meet with **Lady Miyako**. She gives them medicine to help **Kiyoko** and **Masaru**, and asks that **Kay** bring the two psychics to her.

Most of the spies from the outside are hunted down and killed. Only their leader, **Lt. Yamada**, escapes. When **Tetsuo**'s followers are on the verge of catching **Yamada** again, **Ryu** appears and leads him to safety. **Ryu** attempts to gain **Yamada**'s trust, but the **Lieutenant** refuses to tell **Ryu** who has sent him or let **Ryu** join him. **Yamada** does, however, reveal that Russia has conquered part of Japan, and that the Americans' fear of **Akira** makes them reluctant to get involved.

Three young girls are taken from the breadline and given to **Tetsuo** for his pleasure. He orders the girls to swallow capsules of mind-altering drugs. Only one girl—**Kaori**—who

palsms her capsule survives. Under the influence of the drugs, **Tetsuo** relives his past. He sees visions of the present and the possible future as well. Afterwards, believing that his mental resonance with **Akira** is responsible for the odd mental voyage, **Tetsuo** looks into the mind of his Emperor. He emerges a withdrawn, shuddering wreck. Once recovered, **Tetsuo** decides that **Lady Miyako**—whose mind he also briefly touched—may be able to explain matters to him. Taking a hefty dose of power-enhancing medication, **Tetsuo** teleports to the temple of the religious leader. **Lady Miyako** recounts to him the experiments decades earlier which created the numbered psychics from human children. She states that the designations in the twenties were reserved for those of the greatest power. **Lady Miyako** also reveals that World War III began with a mental blast from **Akira** which destroyed Tokyo and killed the scientist who created the psychics. Finally, she warns **Tetsuo** that he alone can control Akira's near-inconceivable powers...but must first give up the drug crutch. Disgusted and perplexed, **Tetsuo** departs.

**Kay** and **Chiyoko** try to



**Lt. Yamada**



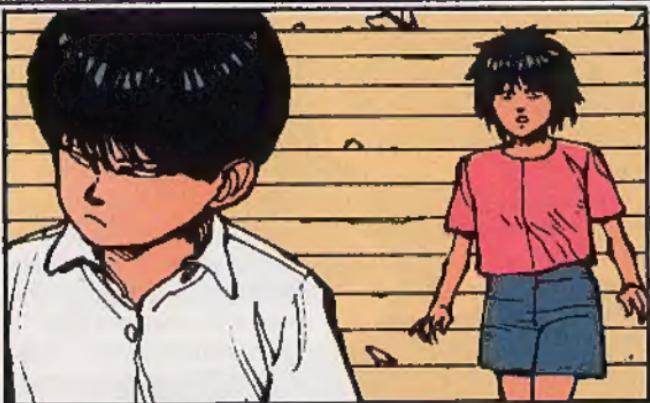
**Kaori**



**Masaru**



**Kiyoko**



move **Masaru** and **Kiyoko** to Lady Miyako's temple. They are attacked by Tetsuo's followers, who escape with **Kiyoko**. **Chiyoko** rescues the girl, but is badly wounded. **Chiyoko** and **Kiyoko** are brought to safety by the **Colonel**, who is living in isolation while the last of his scientists attempts to re-establish contact with the SOL satellite. **Chiyoko**, delirious, tells the **Colonel** to take the child to Lady Miyako's temple, where he'll also find **Masaru**. The **Colonel** departs in a caretaker robot with **Kiyoko**. Meanwhile, with the assistance of Lady Miyako's monks, **Kay** eludes a street gang and safely conveys **Masaru** to the temple. There **Lady Miyako** mysteriously alludes to **Kaneda** and informs **Kay** that although **Kay** herself lacks intrinsic psychic gifts, she serves as a

powerful medium for the talents of others.

**Ryu** and **Yamada** watch the Empire from hiding. They move in when Tetsuo's dapper assistant—disgusted by Tetsuo's lack of interest in the way **Lady Miyako** has thwarted their schemes—leads most of the Empire's men out as an army. **Ryu** and **Yamada** are startled by an encounter with **Tetsuo**, whose withdrawal causes his power to surge erratically. **Ryu** is even more startled when **Tetsuo** blurts out what his telepathy has shown him—that **Yamada** had come to assassinate **Akira**.

Tetsuo's assistant leads his army to Lady Miyako's temple. The army slaughters all in its path—monks, penitents and helpless refugees alike—determined to kill **Lady Miyako** and capture **Kay** and **Masaru**.



Seer



Enforcer



Scientist

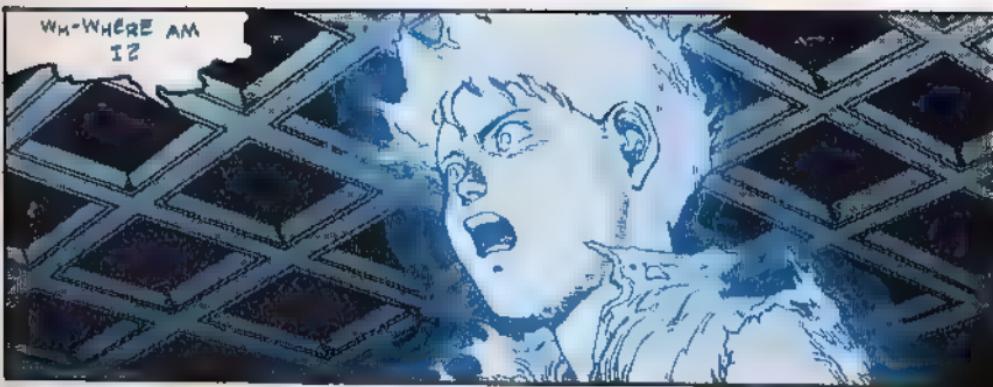


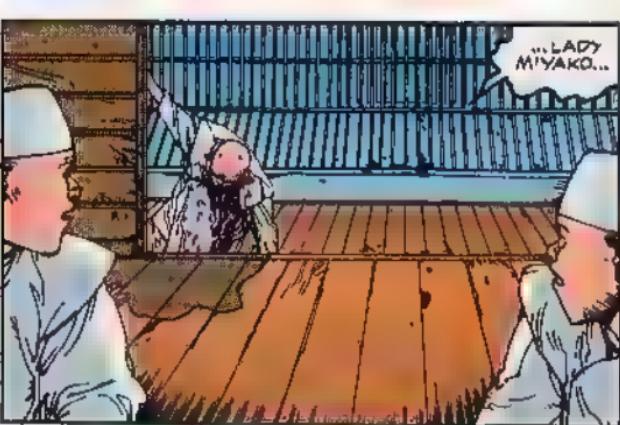
Kaneda











THE FAMOUS LADY  
MURKIN.

I CAN T TELL YOU  
HOW THRILLED I  
AM

TERRORIST  
PIGS!

STAY  
BACK!

LIKE YOU  
CAN MAKE  
US!

WHERE ARE  
THE WOMAN AND  
THE KID?!

DON T TALK IF YOU  
DON T WANT TO WE  
KILL YOU NO MATTER  
WHAT YOU SAY

THIS ACHIEVES NOTHING!



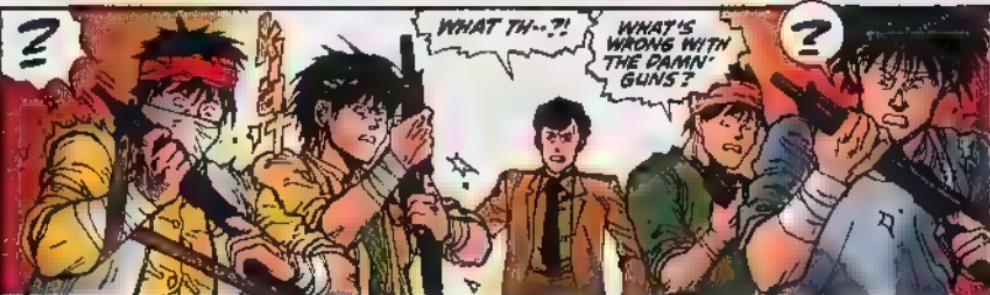
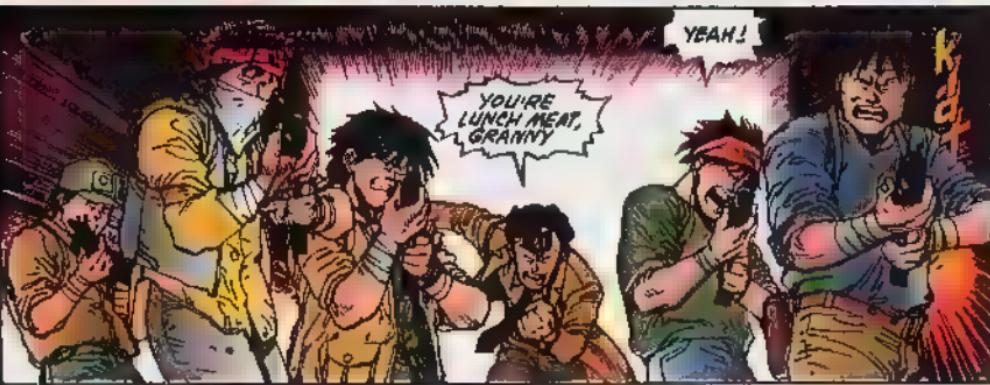
WE DO THIS FOR  
THE GREATER  
GLORY OF MY  
LORD AKIRA  
AND MASTER  
TETSUO!

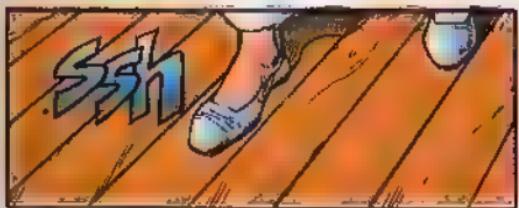
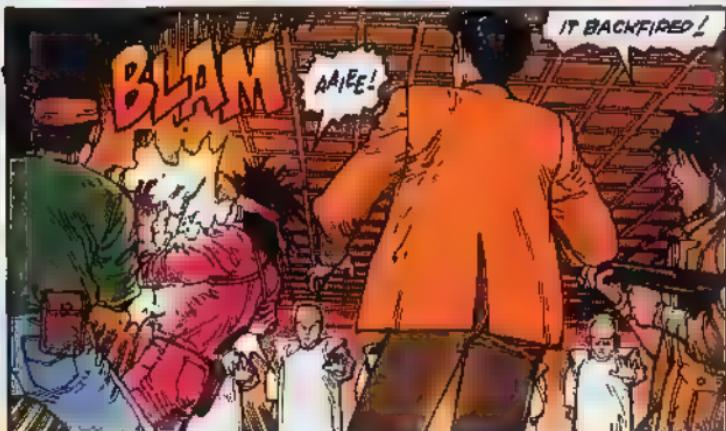
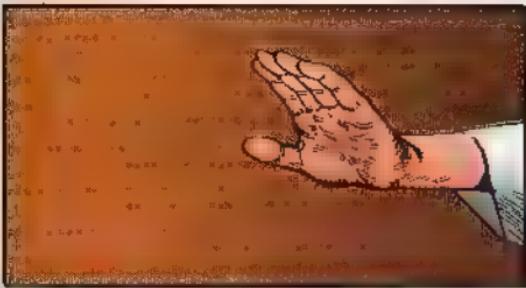
WHAT DO YOU  
THINK ABOUT  
THAT?

DON'T PLAY  
GAMES! THE  
ONLY GLORY  
THAT INTERESTS  
YOU IS YOUR  
OWN!



WHAT WOULD YOU  
KNOW ABOUT IT  
ANYWAY?!





DESTROY THEIR  
GUNS...

...BUT DON'T HARM  
THEM!



WE'VE GOT PSYCHICS  
OF OUR OWN, YOU  
KNOW!



SEND  
THEM  
IN!

THIS IS POINTLESS!

WHY ARE YOU  
DETERMINED  
TO PROLONG  
THE CONFLICT  
AND NEED-  
LESS BLOOD  
SHED?



BECAUSE YOU  
STAND IN OUR  
WAY!



YOU WIELD THE  
POWER...

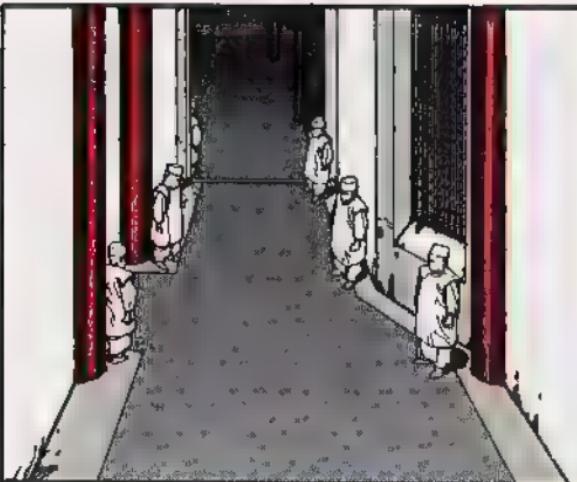
...AND THREATEN  
THE FUTURE OF  
THE GREAT  
TOKYO  
EMPIRE.

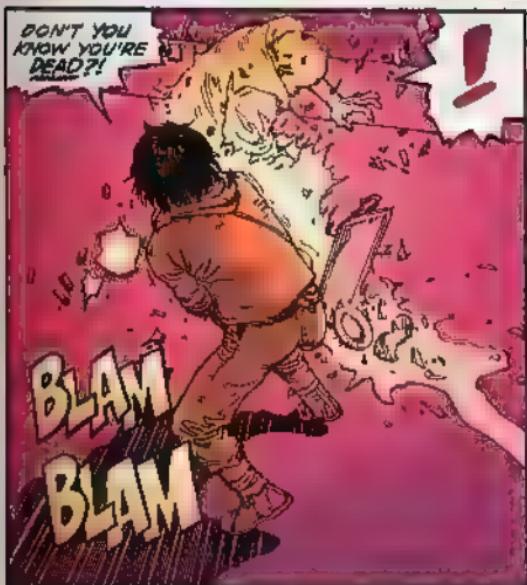






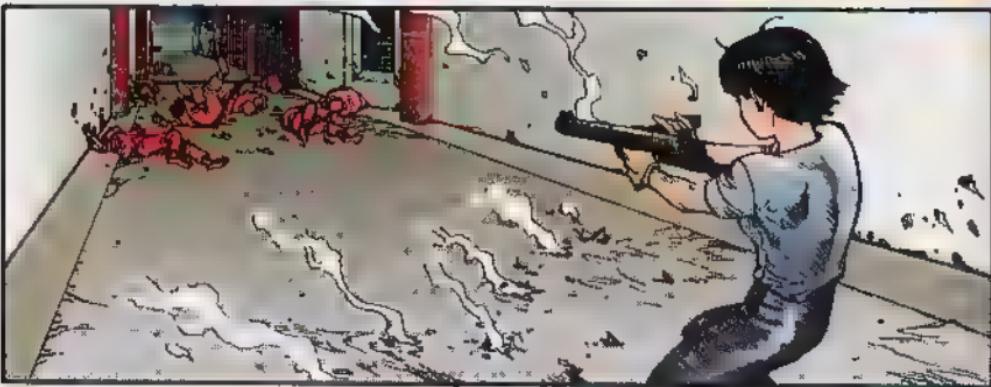














ME? 2

I'M GOING BACK!

... TO HELP  
NUMBER 19!

OOWAAAHH!

EEK!

A-AHHHH!

KROK

AUGH!

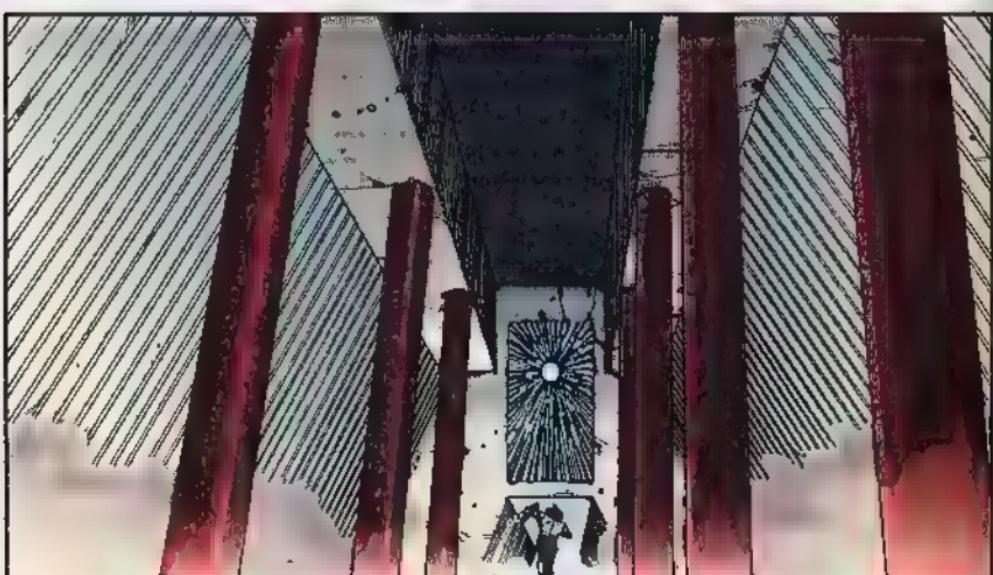
CONCENTRATE!  
WE MUST  
MAINTAIN THE  
FLOW OF  
ENERGY!

YESS!

WHOOAA!







BLAM BLAM

WHOAAA!



AREN'T YOU  
GLYS AFRAID  
OF DYING?

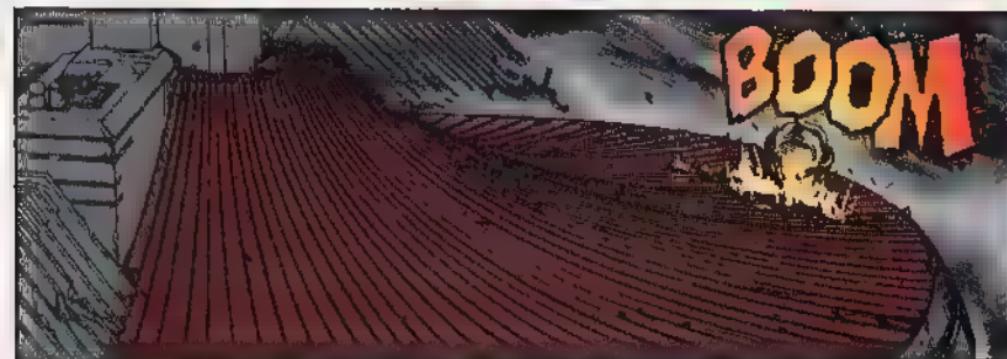
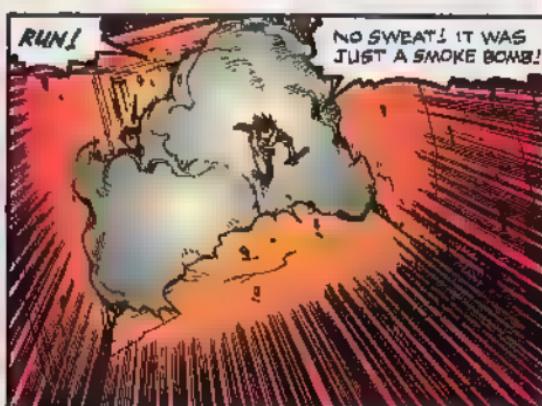


WHAT?!



HAHH!







OOAARRAH!

...?!



WHAT'S  
WRONG WITH  
YOU?



GET  
UP!

GET UP  
AND KILL  
HIM!

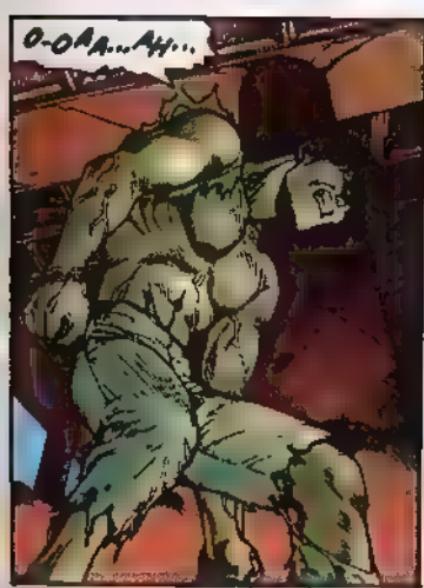
OOA-  
AH...



LOOK!

MOST OF THEM  
ARE ALMOST DEAD  
ALREADY!





WHAT ARE YOU  
SAYING?

HE'S NOT ONE  
OF US!

TOK

WHA?

THAM

GOD DAMN!

A WOMAN!

BAM

OO-OOH!

T'S HER!

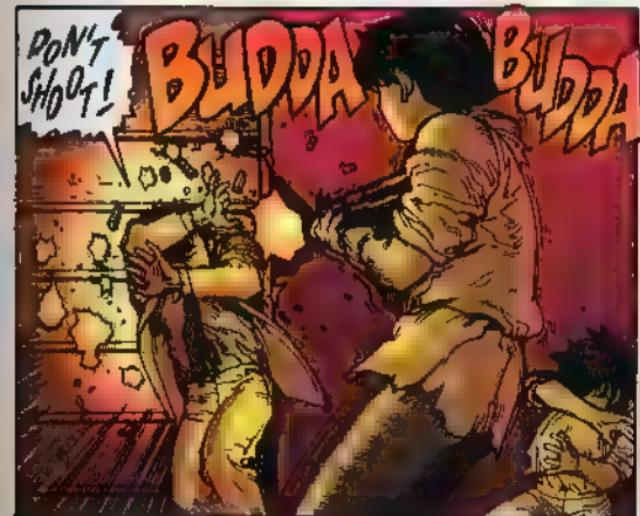
ANYBODY  
MOVES I  
FIRE!

DROP YOUR  
WEAPONS  
AND GET OUT  
OF HERE!

AND IF YOU DON'T  
CLEAR OUT SOON,  
I'LL FIRE ANYWAY.

...AH...UH...

BUT...  
BUT...

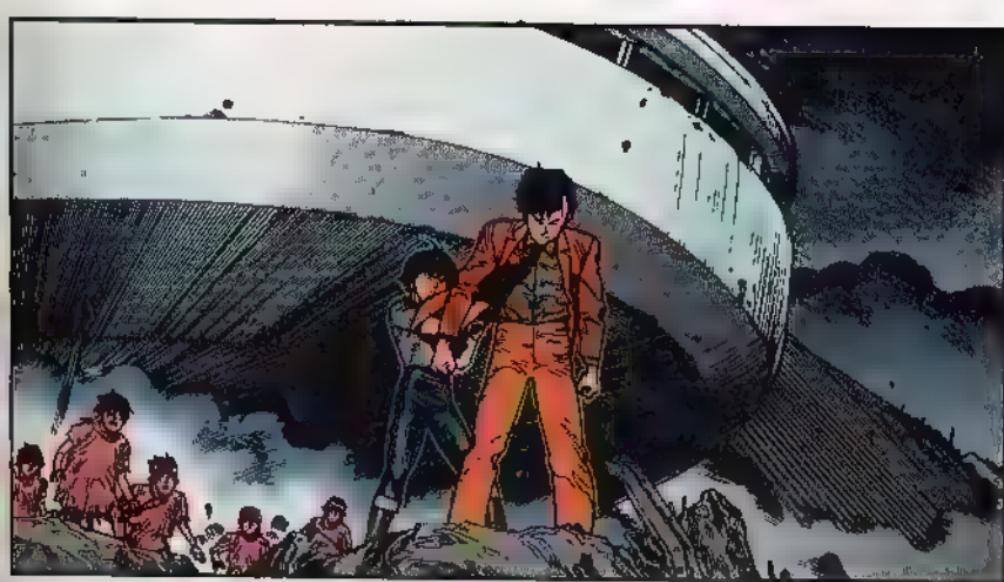


tu-WHEET

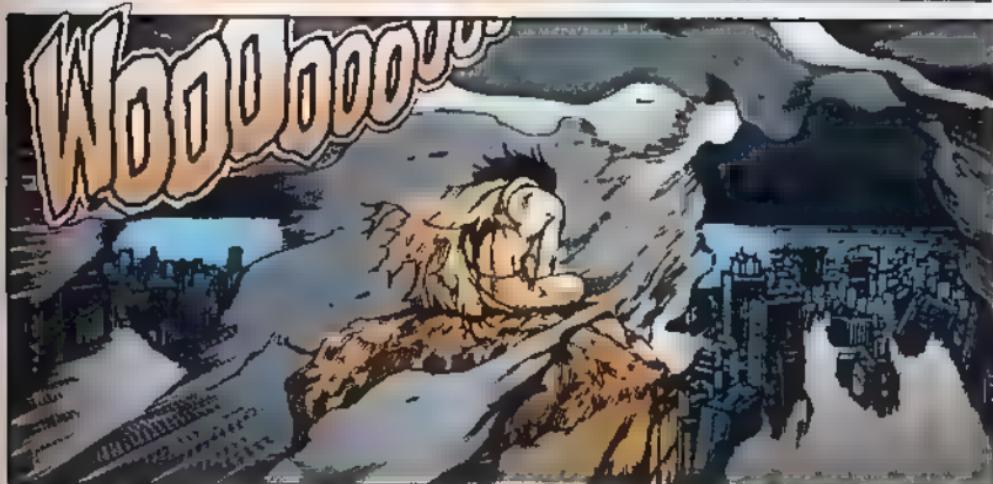
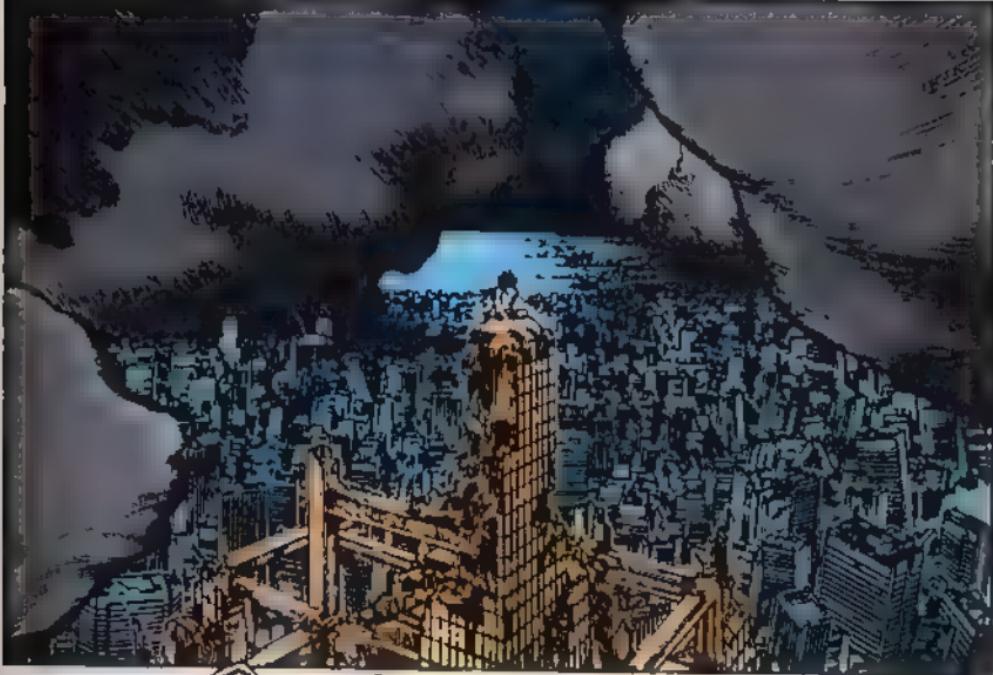


YEAH...

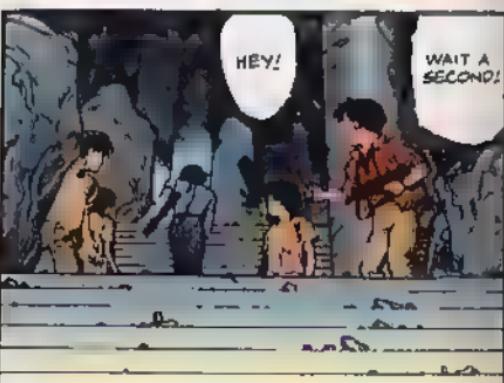
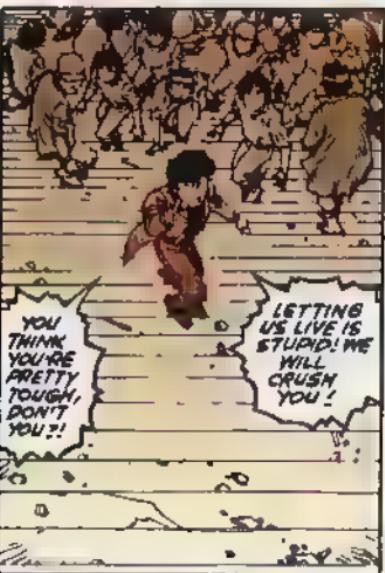








WHOOOO!





THE WOUNDED WILL  
HAVE TO WAIT.  
PUTTING OUT THE  
FIRE HAS TO BE  
OUR FIRST  
PRIORITY.

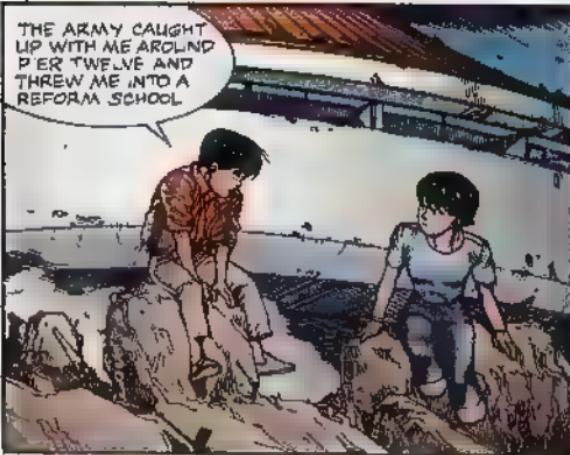
BRING SOME  
WATER!

AAA-AUGH!



THE ARMY CAUGHT  
UP WITH ME AROUND  
P'ER TWELVE AND  
THREW ME INTO A  
REFORM SCHOOL

BEING IN  
THERE SAVED  
MY ASS



IT ALL SEEMS  
SO FAR AWAY  
NOW... LIKE  
ANOTHER  
LIFE



Y KNOW THOSE  
G'YS W'LL BE  
BACK

I'LL HELP YOU  
WHEN THEY DO.



AND I'VE GOT  
FRIENDS

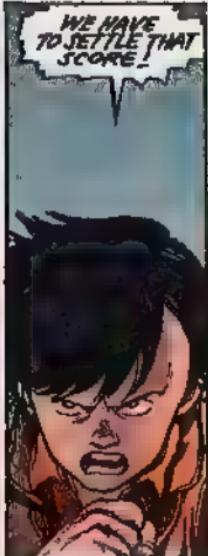




FRIENDS... I  
WAS PART OF A  
PRETTY TOUGH  
GROUP MYSELF,  
ONCE... WITH  
THINGS TO  
FIGHT FOR...  
GOALS WE  
BELIEVED  
IN...

NOW, NOTHING MAKES  
SENSE... IT'S LIKE  
THE DISASTER SWEEP  
EVERYONE'S DEALS  
AND PRINCIPLES AWAY,  
AND EVERYONE  
JUST KEEPS  
KILLING  
EACH  
OTHER.





WE WERE FRIENDS...  
JUST FRIENDS...

JUST FRIENDS?

SHAME

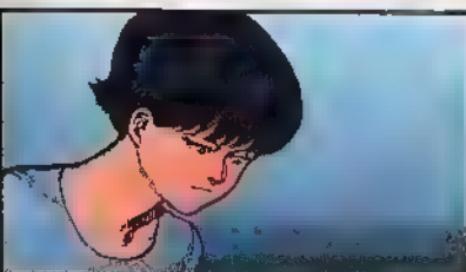


HEY, DON'T BE  
SAD. MAYBE  
HE LOVED  
YOU, TOO.

WHAT?

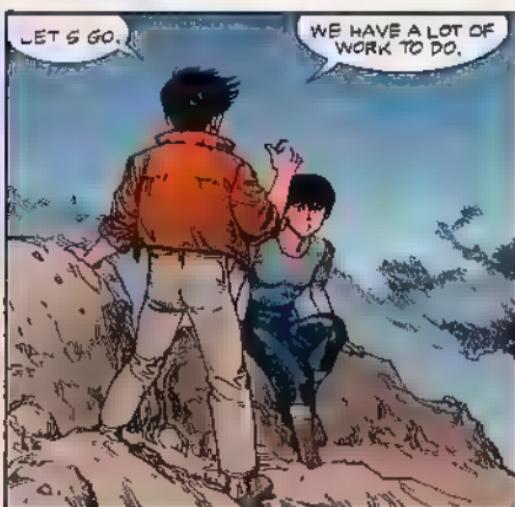
NOT THAT IT  
MATTERS NOW,  
ANYWAY.

HELP!



LET'S GO.

WE HAVE A LOT OF  
WORK TO DO.





SOLDIERS! WE NEED A  
LOT MORE SOLDIERS!

AND GUNS!

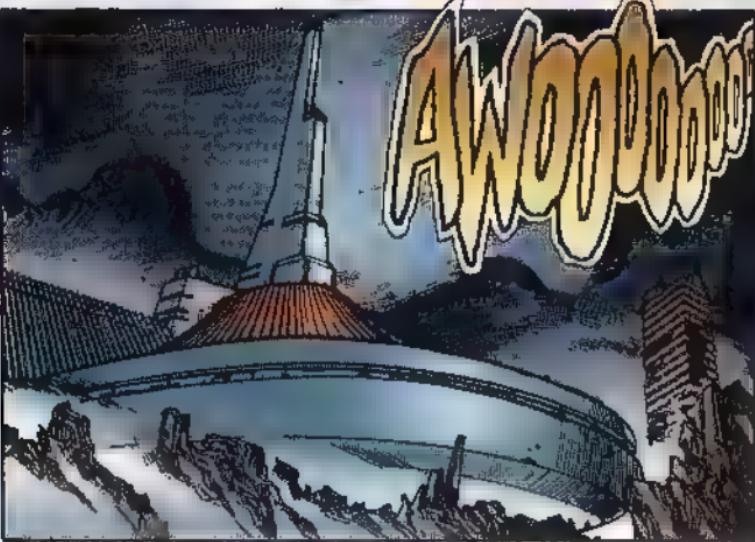
AND BULLETS!  
AND BAZOOKAS!  
AND MISSILES!  
THAT'S THE TICKET!



THEY MADE  
POOLES OF OUR  
EMPIRE!

WE'RE GOING  
BACK THERE IN  
ONE HOUR!







BUT THEY'LL  
BE BACK! AND  
THIS TIME THEY'LL  
BE BETTER PREPARED!  
WE'RE NOT  
STRONG  
ENOUGH  
TO  
DEFEAT  
THEM AGAIN.

AND I THINK NEXT TIME  
TETSUD WILL COME,  
TOO



EVEN IF I WERE  
WILLING TO  
FORSAKE MY  
FOLLOWERS,  
COULD YOU  
REALLY ASK  
ME TO  
ABANDON  
THE SICK  
AND THE  
HELPLESS.

JUST TO SAVE  
MYSELF?



THE ONES THEY WANT  
ARE YOU, ME, AND  
NUMBER 27. IF WE  
AREN'T HERE, THEY  
MAY LEAVE EVERY-  
ONE ELSE ALONE.

I'M TRYING TO  
PREVENT MORE  
SENSELESS  
BLOODSHED!



JEEZ.

WHY WON'T  
YOU GUYS  
JUST LET  
ME IN?



NUMBER 27 AND I  
WILL REMAIN  
HERE.

IT WAS NO SERIES  
OF RANDOM  
ACCIDENTS THAT  
BROUGHT US ALL  
TOGETHER HERE.

WE MUST PERMIT  
DESTINY TO FOLLOW  
ITS COURSE.

IT WOULD BE A  
WASTE FOR YOU  
TO DIE HERE!

THIS IS  
HARDLY A SIMPLE  
QUESTION OF...

TROUBLE WITH  
RELIGIOUS  
GUYS IS  
YOU JUST  
CAN'T ARGUE  
WITH 'EM.

THEY'VE ALWAYS  
GOT GOD ON  
THEIR SIDE  
TELL 'EM  
THEY'RE  
RIGHT

HJNH?



# SHOOM!

UPWIND!  
START UPWIND  
OF THEM!

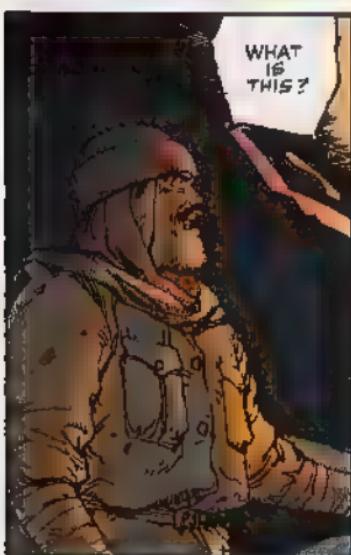
BURN IT ALL  
DOWN!

WHERE'S  
THE EXTRA  
GUNS AND  
AMMO?

AND THE  
REIN-  
FORCEMENTS  
?

HURRY!  
YOU  
SOLDIERS  
MUST HURRY!  
IT'S VITAL  
TO OUR  
EMPIRE!

HURRY!

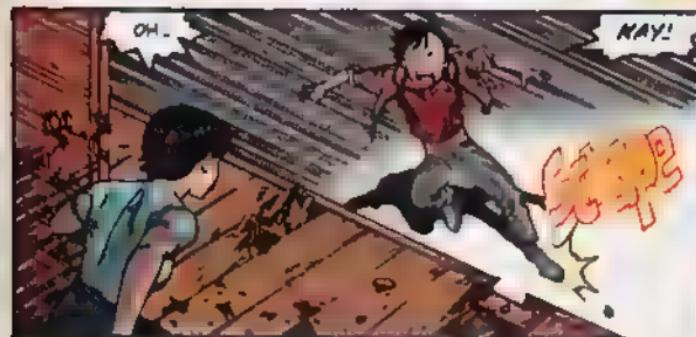
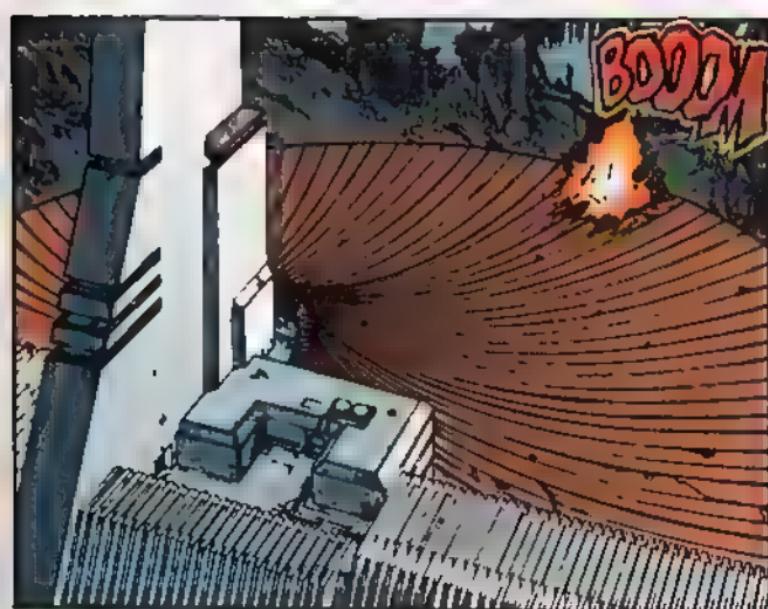












THEY'VE  
BLOWN THE  
BUGLE FOR  
THE FIRST  
CHARGE!

WHAT...  
WE DO?

DOWNTOWN IS A  
ZOO! IF WE TRY TO  
GET OUT THROUGH  
THAT PANIC WE  
COULD GET  
TRAMPLED

AND THERE  
ARE ALREADY  
SOME REF-  
GEES IN  
HERE  
BELOW  
US.

SINCE WE DON'T  
HAVE ANY REAL  
WAY OF HOLDING  
THEM BACK, THEY  
COULD BE IN HERE  
IN A FEW  
MINUTES.

GETTING OUT  
WILL BE TOUGH

WHATEVER  
HAPPENS,  
WE DON'T  
HAVE LONG

AS SOON AS  
THEY BRING  
NUMBER 27 IN,  
WE'D BETTER  
MAKE OUR  
MOVE.

WHERE  
TO?

FROM THE  
TOWER.

WE'LL BE  
ABLE TO SPOT  
ANYONE WHO  
TRIES TO GET  
NEAR US



EVEN IF  
NUMBER 19 WON'T  
COME I  
THINK SHE'D  
APPRECIATE IT  
IF WE TOOK CARE  
OF NUMBER  
27.

NEXT ISSUE. AKIRA'S RAIN

# AKIRA: The Movie

## Katsuhiro Otomo talks about the animated film.

"I wanted to make a movie that would be a jumble of images, instead of just showing the highlights of each scene. I wanted to show the details, and if such details could be seen as a mosaic of the whole, and in retrospect, if the viewer could recall the movie in that way, then that would fit my intention."

"That's why I created Neo-Tokyo to frame and enhance the image I had of AKIRA. Although the movie's title is the name of a child, in fact it does not revolve around any single character. No one person is the main character, yet it is possible for many to be seen as such. All people have drama in their lives, so the plot is simply the intermingling of many such dramas."

"The final sequences for this movie were intended for the original story. I had expected for a long time to end the story with a nostalgic conversation between Kaneda and Tetsuo. In the original story, however, I was unable to control that because the characters seemed to go their own way. Once they gain their own momentum, it is difficult even for the creator to halt them—so the ending must be planned well in advance."

"One of the problems I had in creating this movie was connecting the scenes. Although I had sufficient images from the script to cover the major scenes, the problem was linking the ones leading to the climax. Another problem was the flow or tempo of the story. Because the movie had to fit within a framework of two hours, it was important not to waste any time when cutting to other scenes. In comic stories, one is allowed greater freedom to digress, but if you try the same thing in a movie, it loses its clarity and sharpness."



"When I was working on the storyboards, I kept the consideration of animation always in mind, but it was very difficult. There were so many simple scenes, such as a character walking toward the camera, which makes things difficult. On T.V. the camera can pan to the upper sections, but in this movie the character's whole body had to be in view, and its movements had to seem lifelike. The many such supposedly simple scenes like these created the greatest problems for me."

"In the final sequences, which feature Tetsuo's transformation, a lot of the action can only be captured by animation. To show such scenes with a sense of realism depends a lot on the appearance of the backgrounds. If a comic character is established from the beginning, even realistic endings do not change that first impression. The viewer suspends disbelief in the character and is not surprised by anything that happens. For example, in order to show spectacular scenes or extraordinary powers, the artist has to depict normal backgrounds and scenes with a great sense of reality. In so doing, the scenes of devastation take on an added sense of realism. I also pay much attention to the value of artwork and color in enhancing reality."

"I feel that everyone does this in all movies; if the audience doesn't believe in the character, then the movie will be a failure. So it is very necessary to create a sense of reality for the story to develop."

## **AKIRA: the movie AN UPDATE**

Upcoming **AKIRA** dates include:

**BOSTON AREA**  
**BROOKLINE, MA**  
**COOLIDGE CORNER MOVIEHOUSE**  
August 31-September 13

**KEENE, NH**  
**PUTNAM SCREENING ROOM**  
September 7-9

**WICHITA, KS**  
**NORTH ROCK SIX**  
September 13

**WATERVILLE, ME**  
**RAILROAD SQUARE CINEMA**  
September 14-20

**NORTHAMPTON, MA**  
**PLEASANT STREET THEATER**  
September 19-25

Also, look for **AKIRA** in New York City at the New Film Forum in early Fall.

**KATSUHIRO OTOMO**

writer/illustrator

**YASUMITSU SUETAKE**  
chief assistant to Mr. Otomo

**MAKOTO SHIOSAKI**  
**SATOSHI TAKABATAKE**  
assistants to Mr. Otomo

**HIROSHI HIRATA**  
designer • *AKIRA* calligraphy

**AKIRA SAITO**  
designer • Kodansha edition

**Kodansha Ltd.**

**YOKO UMEZAWA**  
translation

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A

midst the chaos still rolling through Neo-Tokyo, Lady Miyako's temple was once a refuge, a place of comfort and healing for the troubled injured masses. Once...but no more—now it is a trap, four walls that allow no escape from Tetsuo's aide and the army he's assembled to advance his own power. The army drives forward ruthlessly, intent on seizing Kay and the psychic child, Masaru, crushing back Lady Miyako and her monks—modern weaponry against mental telepathy, the only common ground between the pool of red spreading out around them both...

KATSUHIRO OTOMO'S

AKIRA

